

Town of Bloomfield
Economic Development Commission Meeting
800 Bloomfield Avenue, Conference Room #5
MINUTES
Tuesday, August 18, 2015

Present: Jerry Long, Bonnie Bercowetz, Michele Bononi, Jerry Katrichis, Fred Hesketh,

Also present: José Giner, Joan Gamble, Joel Neuwirth, Dale Bertoldi, Rich Hughes, David Driver, Mike Goman, Rob Rowson, Don Poland, Philip Schenck, Raquel Kennedy and Samantha Sojka

Chairman Long called the meeting to order at 8:30am.

Ms. Bercowetz made a motion to accept minutes of the July 14, 2015 meeting. Ms. Bononi seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Wintonbury Mall

Mike Goman reported that the Wintonbury Mall auction was taking place as of August 17 and ending on August 19. We do not know who is bidding nor how many bidders there are. He stated that after the bidding closes and a high bidder is identified there is a process that can last up to thirty days where the buyer and the seller do their respective due diligence. The highest bidder does not necessarily get the winning bid. The property generally closes 15 days after the completion of the due diligence. It may take a few weeks to know who the new owner is. Mr. Goman stated that he would keep the Town updated on any information that he receives.

Ms. Bercowetz asked if there was a reserve bid. Mr. Goman replied that it was 1.9 million dollars. Mr. Rowson believes the reserve is equal to 20 cents on the dollar for what the property is worth.

Business Energy Savings Initiative

Samantha Sojka of Eversource (formerly CL&P) passed out brochures with PowerPoint slides that summarized the program that was being offered through the auspices of Bloomfield's Clean Energy and Environment Committee. She stated that the goal was to bring energy efficiency to communities. She noted that Bloomfield had a great experience with the Clean Energy Communities program on the residential side and this program would expand it to include businesses in Bloomfield.

Ms. Sojka stated that she was here to ask for EDC support for the program. She stated that similar to the residential program two vendors had been chosen to help run the business initiative – Victory Energy and Paquette Electric. As with the residential program up to \$250 would be donated to the Energy Fuel Bank in Bloomfield for each successful project. She stated that the program would provide free on-site assessments to businesses. The assessments would be used to create a proposal with a list of measures that a business could take to increase their energy efficiency. It would be then up to the business whether to act on it or not. A business could also choose to undertake only some of the projects if it so wished. Eversource would provide 0% financing to eligible companies (under 200kw peak) which would be charged on their monthly bill. The charge would be less than the energy savings that were realized per month. Ms. Sojka also stated that there were programs geared toward larger businesses.

Ms. Sojka stated that they were planning a September 30, 2015 kick-off at Carbone's Kitchen in which all businesses would be invited for a casual Happy Hour style meeting. There would be follow-up on the part of Eversource and the vendors.

Chairman Long asked if the Chamber of Commerce had been notified. Ms. Sojka stated that they had been in contact with the Executive Director, Jill Fitzgerald. Chairman Long stated that he did not believe that the Chamber executive committee had been made aware of this initiative.

Mr. Katrichis asked if there was a minimum number of employees needed to qualify for assistance. Ms. Sojka stated that it was not based on employees but rather the amount of electricity used.

Joel Neuwirth asked how many Towns were in the program and there was any success stories. He stated that marketing was the key to getting a good turnout. He also thought that better communication with the Chamber of Commerce was needed.

Phil Schenck noted there were 1,000 businesses registered with the Town Clerk.

Raquel Kennedy of Victory Energy Solutions stated that Bloomfield has one of the highest participation rates for the residential program. She stated that the Business incentive program had also been started in Clinton and Killingly but that it was a relatively new program and they had no report on how successful it was yet. Mr. Schenck noted that the Town sends out a welcome packet to residents whenever property transfers.

Mr. Rowlson noted that you need more than the Chamber to market this program. He suggested getting a media partner. Also suggested that they not overload the presentation to businesses with too much information. In this instance less is better for small businesses.

Ms. Bononi asked if the vendors were Connecticut businesses. Ms. Sojka replied that they were.

Chairman Long asked what was expected from the EDC. Mr. Rowlson suggested a motion of support.

Chairman Long stated that the EDC would take it under advisement and possibly vote on it at their next meeting.

Filley Park Update

Mr. Schenck reported that the bid for Phase I was opened on July 30 and came in at \$577,000. Phase II was estimated at 1.5 million and will be put into the Capital Improvement program for the next FY and beyond. Mr. Schenck reported that all federal and State permits have been obtained and are good for three years. Future phases include a parking lots and pavilion for Phase 4 and work on the island and trails for Phase 5. He reported that Public Works has trimmed the growth along various trails and was working with the State to remove invasive European Water Chestnut from the pond. He also stated that we needed a strategy for geese control to prevent the propagation of invasive species.

Mr. Schenck reported that construction on Phase I would begin in about 30 to 40 days.

Ms. Bercowetz asked if the invasive plants would still be present until the dredging is done. Mr. Schenck stated that they would. All we could do for now is control the part that is visible at the surface.

Staff Update

Mr. Giner made the following report:

The owners of an urgent care facility have settled on a unit in the Wintonbury mall and have an application pending before the TPZ. The interested party is a Bloomfield resident and currently owns two other health care facilities.

The Center apartments are on the Town Council Agenda requesting a drainage easement and for consideration of a fifth story at the northwest corner of their proposed building. They are proposing 212 units and the financing is in place.

Deringer-Ney has filed for a Building Permit for their new facility at the corner of Woodland Ave. and Mucko Road.

The Town hosted Niagara Bottling on July 28. They are looking at two possible sites in Bloomfield as well as a third elsewhere. We are coordinating with the Metro Hartford Alliance to get all the utilities and other parties to address any concerns.

Phil Schenck stated that the Building Permit for the CREC school at the former JP Vincent site had also been received in August and that CREC was looking at building an new school on Griffin Land property near the Farmington River.

Ms. Bononi asked if there were any schematics on the apartments in the Center. Mr. Schenck replied that they had not presented anything yet.

A question was asked regarding the proposed fifth story. Mr. Schenck replied that it was over the amenity area which would be take up a substantial amount of first floor space. Mr. Goman stated that the trend is to offer premium amenities in the more upscale developments.

Mr. Rowson reported on the Center Merchants meeting that was held the previous morning. He stated that it was well attended considering that it was August and many were on vacation. The merchants were going to get a brochure together for inclusion in the packets going to incoming freshmen at the University of Hartford. It was a little rushed this year but they hoped to have a better representation for the next year. The merchants were also working on a brochure that would be available to the general public to promote businesses in the Center.

Motion was made by Jerry Katrichis to adjourn the meeting at 9:40 am. Seconded by Fred Hesketh and passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
José Giner, AICP, Director of Planning and Economic Development